

earlier, general staff now have some form of arrangement with universities under state jurisdiction and this seems likely to continue as the main arena for the next five years or so.

I would anticipate there will be a slow trend towards federal coverage and this could well be accelerated if there were another period of financial stringency where general staff were seriously threatened by redundancy or loss of jobs. This forecast of only slow change depends on the assumption that the unique Australian industrial relations mechanism remains basically unchanged, as appears likely. If the rules change, the actors may behave very differently.

The role of the academic staff in the last Act will be very different. There is no doubt that the Victorian tutors' case won significant improvements in conditions. It must be tempting for Staff Associations to contemplate repeating the exercise elsewhere under State jurisdiction, particularly as it may be difficult to achieve such a result under the much more formal proceedings of the Federal Commission.

"When federal registration is achieved, the AUIA will do its utmost to ensure that all major disputes are heard before the Federal Commission rather than in the states . . ."

While this may well happen in the short term, I do not believe that it represents a continuing pattern of activity in the future for a number of reasons. First, FAUSA is genuinely anxious to secure federal registration. They see it as a far better arena in which to discuss salaries and similar conditions than the Academic Salaries Tribunal. A federal award is binding and not subject to government intervention. When federal registration is achieved, the AUIA will do its utmost to ensure that all major disputes are heard before the Federal Commission rather than in the states, for this would avoid a leap-frogging pattern of action in various states successively improving conditions in an uncontrolled way. FAUSA, also, would be concerned at too much action being generated by state or individual associations lest it frustrate the overall strategy. It seems likely that academic

staff industrial relations will within a year or so mainly take place federally, leaving the state jurisdictions to deal with problems like unfair dismissals.

This move will have considerable consequences. On the universities' side, AUIA is ready to handle the employers' side. The three absent universities have now joined the Association, the uniform has all its buttons complete. The Association is now distinct from the AVCC with its own staff and procedures, but it will face major difficulties.

The governing bodies of universities have rightly considered themselves as autonomous bodies able to prescribe conditions for their staff. Although they have given their vice-chancellors authority to negotiate on their behalf, councils will find it difficult to accept that proceedings conducted elsewhere will overrule their desired policies. It will not be easy to formulate such policies in any case. Councils traditionally have significant staff membership, often active members of their staff associations, and will have to formulate procedures by which industrial policies can be developed that serve the interests of the whole university.

Equally, AUIA will have to ensure that lines of communication with individual universities are sufficiently swift and secure that such policies can be taken into account. Inevitably, however, decisions will sometimes be taken that run counter to the wishes of some councils and their vice-chancellors. That will cause conflict, tensions and unease, particularly if the content of the decisions is more concerned with conditions than salaries. In time, I foresee that the whole concept of collegiality will be destroyed.

Another difficulty may be connected with inter-union rivalry and the problem of the employers having to negotiate with several unions representing academic staff. The original concept was that AUIA and the FAUSA industrial organisation would be the prime parties, with the NSW Teachers' Federation having a small role in that state. However, that sole coverage of academic staff is being attacked now in two ways.

The Association of Professional Engineers has attempted to gain coverage of university engineering staff. Although thwarted at the moment, it is likely APEA will try again at some future time. The Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation is attempting to gain coverage of academic staff in medical education and research. It may well succeed and

other professional bodies may follow their example.

In other recent developments, the Federation of College Academics may find itself covering some university staff as a result of upgrading of colleges to universities by state legislation and amalgamations. It is unlikely they would willingly abandon coverage of whole institutions. All this leads to a scenario where Federal Commission hearings may involve several parties leading to complicated negotiations which may be inimical to the best interests of the institutions.

"In time, I foresee that the whole concept of collegiality will be destroyed."

Equally worrying is the problem of funding awards made by the Commission. Although it has occasionally faltered, the Federal Government has provided funds for recommendations handed down by the Academic Salaries Tribunal. It has yet to be seen whether the Government will take part in proceedings before the Federal Commission. I have a suspicion that it will move to a system of prospective funding, including an allowance for future salary increases, and leave AUIA in an advisory role to ensure that it lives within that allowance. Such a policy would lead to a further deterioration in staff relations and the concept of collegiality.

So ends the entr'acte. We sit in our seats waiting for the curtain to rise on the last act. If my interpretation of the music is correct, it is going to be a somewhat confused tragic ending, like most operas. The tradition of universities being a different, less structured form of employment will end. We are now an industry and, over time, will find ourselves behaving like an industry. It is unlikely that there will be prescribed hours of work, clocking in and so on, but the flexibility and freedom that we have all appreciated will decline. The Force of Destiny may turn out to be in fact La Traviata, the Frail One.

But hush! The curtain is about to rise.

***At the time this was written Professor Scott was Chairman of the Australian Universities' Industrial Association. He has been succeeded by Professor D. Caro.**

Chips in the academic wall?

Women and postgraduate study

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In view of the considerable concern over the minority status of women academics¹, it is surprising that women postgraduates have attracted so little research interest² when it would be safe to assert that a doctorate is now a universal prerequisite for an academic career. By examining some statistics and collating the few studies that have been conducted, this paper reviews what is known about the current position of Australian women in postgraduate study.

The figures

Table 1 restates some commonly known facts. Women now constitute almost half of the university undergraduate popula-

tion. In 1984, 48% of students commencing bachelor degrees were women but only about 30% of students commencing PhDs and 37% of students commencing masters degrees were women. The greatest increase in the proportion of students who are women is, however, occurring at the masters level. These figures, together with those showing higher proportions of women commencing postgraduate diplomas are often cited as evidence that women fail to envisage the 'higher goal' of a PhD and consequently are less competitive in the academic sweepstakes.³ Nevertheless despite many constraints (which will be discussed later), women have been gradually but steadily chipping

away at the academic wall; more women now both commence and complete higher degrees than they did in 1979.

Gender imbalance in different fields of study both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level is common knowledge and most publications dealing with this topic have emphasised a persistence over time of male dominance in subject areas traditionally held to be 'masculine'. The statistical record demonstrates, however, that the situation has altered dramatically over the past decade. As Table 2 shows⁴, at the undergraduate level women have moved out of 'female' fields overall at a faster rate than the rate of decrease in the share of total enrolments in those fields,

Table 1
University Students Commencing and Completing Post-graduate and Bachelor Degrees by Sex, 1979-1984.

Degree	Commencing			Completing		
	Males	Females %	Persons	Males	Females %	Persons
PhD						
1979	795	269 (25)	1064	730	141 (16)	871
1980	770	257 (25)	1027	678	163 (19)	841
1981	907	318 (26)	1225	711	184 (21)	895
1982	1207	482 (29)	1687	697	204 (23)	901
1983	918	394 (30)	1312	704	202 (22)	906
1984	984	402 (29)	1387	761	195 (20)	956
Masters						
1979	3168	1367 (30)	4535	1630	514 (24)	2144
1980	3088	1446 (31)	4534	1556	538 (26)	2094
1981	3590	1803 (33)	5393	1639	617 (27)	2256
1982	3710	1972 (35)	5682	1617	623 (28)	2240
1983	3424	1816 (35)	5240	1830	754 (29)	2584
1984	3300	1909 (37)	5209	1997	846 (30)	2843
Postgraduate Diploma						
1979	2099	1946 (48)	4045	1692	1873 (53)	3565
1980	2098	1956 (48)	4054	1547	1740 (53)	3287
1981	2094	1908 (48)	4002	1452	1662 (53)	3114
1982	1913	1883 (50)	3796	1362	1559 (54)	2961
1983	2059	2080 (50)	4139	1337	1507 (53)	2844
1984	2161	2062 (49)	4223	1393	1634 (54)	3027
Bachelor						
1979	23281	18877 (45)	42158	15594	10561 (40)	26155
1980	23070	19709 (46)	42779	15199	10660 (41)	25859
1981	22698	19850 (47)	42548	14610	10872 (43)	25482
1982	21741	19738 (48)	41479	14208	10999 (44)	25207
1983	21743	19946 (48)	41689	14148	11579 (45)	25727
1984	22459	20891 (48)	43350	14448	11470 (44)	25918

Source of Data: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cat. No. 4218.0

Table 2
University Undergraduate Enrolments by Field of Study, 1975 and 1982.
Expressed as Percentages of Total Enrolments by Sex.

Field of Study	1975			1982		
	Males %	Females %	Persons %	Males %	Females %	Persons %
Humanities*	21.4	48.7	31.6	18.9	41.5	29.2
Fine Arts*	0.3	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.6
Social, Behavioural Sciences*	2.6	7.3	4.4	4.2	9.4	6.6
Education*	3.9	6.9	5.0	2.5	6.6	4.4
Law**	8.0	4.2	6.6	7.4	6.0	6.8
Economics, Commerce**	17.4	6.8	13.4	18.1	9.6	14.2
Medicine**	8.1	7.8	7.8	8.4	7.0	7.7
Dentistry**	1.6	0.6	1.2	1.3	0.6	1.0
Natural Sciences**	17.8	14.0	16.4	18.6	14.0	16.5
Engineering, Technology**	12.8	0.4	8.1	13.9	1.2	8.1
Architecture, Building**	2.9	1.0	2.2	3.2	1.3	2.4
Agriculture, Forestry**	2.2	0.8	1.7	2.0	1.0	1.5
Veterinary Science**	1.0	0.6	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Total	%	100	100	%	100	100
	n	75187	45440	n	60120	131930
'Male'	%	71.8	36.3	%	41.6	59.2
Fields**	n	54012	16495	n	25020	78100
'Female'	%	28.2	63.7	%	58.4	40.8
Fields*	n	21175	28945	n	35100	53830

*Traditional 'female' fields

** Traditional 'male' fields

Source of Data: Australian Bureau of Statistics Cat. no. 4208.0

particularly in the humanities (expansion of the social and behavioural science area has accommodated increases in both male and female enrolments). Conversely, there have been significant shifts of undergraduate women into 'male' fields which outstrip enrolment increases amongst men in these fields. The most dramatic shift has been into engineering: female enrolment have almost quadrupled (albeit from a small base) over the period.

It has been suggested that higher education enrolment changes give a measure of the social acceptability of female participation.⁵ This might be seen to apply at the degree level, the field level and even within particular fields. Thus one could say that if it is now socially accepted that women undertake bachelor degrees and postgraduate diplomas, it is now more befitting than previously for them to enrol in masters programs but less so in doctorates. Similarly with fields of study. Undergraduate degrees and ensuing non-academic careers for women in medicine, law, veterinary science and some areas of the natural sciences are much more acceptable than they were a decade and more ago. On the one hand it can be argued that these male domains that have the highest 'human interest' component (and therefore more characteristic of traditionally 'feminine' fields) are attracting women. On the other hand we have

observed a very substantial shift of undergraduate females into other traditionally 'masculine' areas, indicating, on the basis of the social acceptability concept, that fields such as economics, architecture and agriculture are not the exclusive male clubs they once were.

In this context, the postgraduate figures are also informative. It may be calculated from Table 3 that it was only in Fine Arts in 1975 that female higher degree enrolments exceeded 50%. On that basis, higher degree courses were almost exclusively male bastions. In 1982, however, female postgraduate enrolments in the humanities exceeded 50% and were just under half in the social and behavioural sciences. The data in Table 3 shows that enrolments in 'masculine' fields as a proportion of total enrolments have decreased: this is due more to a decreasing proportion of men than women. One may conclude that with the overall increase in female participation in higher degree study women have almost 'caught up' with males in female fields of study, but their participation in male fields is also increasing. Buckridge and Barham also noted that the change from 1972 to 1982 in the proportion of women undertaking higher degrees has been substantial and consistent from year to year and that if the trend continues, women will constitute half the higher degree students in

fifteen years' time.⁶ It would be expected then, that the proportion of female postgraduates undertaking courses in male fields would also continue to rise, but would lag behind increases expected on the basis of current trends at the undergraduate level.

Social acceptability?

Without denying the usefulness of the social acceptability concept as a peg to hang statistics upon, nor its validity in the wider community, its inherent drawbacks must be emphasised. First, it is an oversimplification: women of different ages, from different social groups and with various responsibilities make a range of deeply-considered and rational decisions about whether to undertake higher degrees or not and in which field. At one end of the spectrum a young well-qualified woman from a family of enlightened professionals would more easily consider a higher degree in one of the science-based disciplines than at the other end: say, an older woman seeking a diploma update of a previous qualification but with a less enlightened husband. Secondly, the concept may give rise to academic complacency and reinforce the view that the university plays no role in the gender socialisation process which is blamed on dominant cultural norms 'outside'.

... disincentives in certain fields of employment 'outside', attitudes to careers, and even to certain fields of study, stop women from trying to do honours, gain higher degrees, undertake research ... and be around eagerly applying for (academic) jobs.⁷

Certainly, socio-cultural attitudes are important influences on women, but they are by no means the only bricks in the academic wall.

Honours?

Considerably smaller proportions of women proceed to the honours year or its equivalent. Buckridge and Barham's survey at Griffith University showed women proceeding at half the rate of men. Age was not a factor, neither was achievement, as women did not receive lower grades at the bachelor level. It appeared rather to be women's lack of confidence that they would do well despite their proven achievement record.⁸ Reilly inferred from a survey of undergraduates at the University of Melbourne that students perceived the honours year as a testing period for students' initiative and capacity for independent inquiry which would form the basis for determining their scholarly potential.⁹ This being the case, women's greater lack of confidence that they could meet the test may be a factor in decisions not to continue. There is also the problem of 'fear of success that is

grounded both in the inevitability of appearing "different" and the fear that they are not really as good as their qualifications would seem to indicate'.¹⁰

Advice, encouragement and support from academic staff play a significant part in undergraduates' decisions to continue study. Reilly distinguishes 'general' encouragement for further study and 'specific' encouragement in terms of advice. With respect to the former, women are more disadvantaged by the type of social processes involved: 'mentor-protégé relationships were seldom established between male staff and female students'.¹¹ Reilly also found that specific encouragement or advice about research areas, programs, and financial assistance, may be dispensed on the basis of staff perceptions of the 'appropriateness' of postgraduate study and at which level for men and women. Such conditions which may affect women's decisions to proceed to the honours year and, indeed, beyond to a doctorate, are in need of further exploration, most importantly by academic staff in the context of whether attitudes and practices within the university negatively affect women's perceptions of the first step on the academic track.

Incentives?

Powles¹² examined earlier surveys of Australian postgraduates which asked for their perceptions in retrospect about in-

fluences on the decision to undertake higher degrees by research; influences such as intrinsic interest in the pursuit of learning, personal fulfilment, the extent to which a higher degree is perceived to be a necessary precursor to a chosen occupation, enhancement of employability, perception of the labour market in general, parental and academic staff influence and the extent and availability of financial assistance. Overwhelmingly, the surveys demonstrated that intrinsic interest and personal fulfilment were the principal reasons for going on to higher degree study. Reilly's surveys also showed academic interest to be the most important motivating factor for the majority of both male and female students but especially for females.¹³ Despite motivational factors which would therefore appear to favour females in their decisions to embark on higher degrees, other factors are surely at work which result in the lower proportion of women than men in higher degree study, and indeed, the higher attrition amongst women at that level.

Postgraduates cannot live by intrinsic interest alone. The main forms of financial support for postgraduate degrees are the Commonwealth Postgraduate Research Awards Scheme and scholarships provided by individual institutions, both of which are highly competitive. The percentage of applicants obtaining

Table 3
University Higher Degree Enrolments by Field of Study, 1975 and 1982.
Expressed as a Percentage of Total Enrolments by Sex.

Field of Study	1975			1982		
	Males %	Females %	Persons %	Males %	Females %	Persons %
Humanities*	9.5	28.9	21.3	9.2	23.1	13.5
Fine Arts*	0.5	1.9	1.3	0.9	2.0	1.2
Social, Behavioural Sciences*	5.8	15.0	7.6	7.6	16.1	10.2
Education*	11.6	18.0	13.0	14.1	23.9	17.1
Law**	3.9	2.0	3.5	3.5	2.5	3.2
Economics, Commerce**	15.3	6.5	13.4	15.9	8.4	13.6
Medicine**	3.6	4.5	3.9	5.4	5.5	5.4
Dentistry**	1.0	0.2	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.9
Natural Sciences**	23.9	16.4	22.3	20.2	12.3	17.8
Engineering, Technology**	14.8	1.4	11.9	14.3	1.5	10.3
Architecture, Building**	3.4	2.4	3.2	2.7	1.7	2.4
Agriculture, Forestry**	5.1	1.8	4.3	4.2	1.8	3.5
Veterinary Science**	1.2	0.6	1.0	0.9	0.6	0.8
Total	%	100	100	%	100	100
	n	13044	3632	n	16150	23290
'Male'	%	72.4	36.2	%	68.3	58.1
Fields**	n	9446	1314	n	11030	13520
'Female'	%	27.6	63.8	%	31.7	41.9
Fields*	n	3598	2318	n	4650	9770

*Traditional 'female' fields

**Traditional 'male' fields

Source of Data: Australian Bureau of Statistics Cat. no. 4208.0

Commonwealth awards has decreased since the mid-1970s so that access of good second class and some first class honours students to these awards has become more restricted.¹⁴ It would be expected in view of women's lesser confidence that restricted availability of highly competitive awards would deter some women from applying for postgraduate study.

In Poiner's survey of graduates at the University of Sydney, inadequate financial support was given as one important reason for students not wishing to proceed.¹⁵ Also, Reilly found at the University of Melbourne that honours students' decisions to undertake higher degrees were mediated by financial considerations.¹⁶ Lack of financial support is an important factor in discontinuation at the bachelor degree level with more women than men affected.¹⁷ Women in younger adult age groups have a greater propensity than males to leave the parental home¹⁸ and therefore incur higher living costs. Moreover, the low levels of the Commonwealth and University awards which have declined in real value since 1970, could hardly act as an incentive to independent students or to those younger people who wish to achieve independence from parents when there is a substantial shortfall between the stipend and very basic living costs.¹⁹ If students in receipt of scholarships are living near poverty levels, financial worries, which are exacerbated by the limitation on the amount which may be earned by research scholarship holders, would only become accentuated with age and serve to interfere with study motivation. Research degrees might then take longer to complete or the decision may be made to discontinue. Other women intent on postgraduate study may opt for shorter, but less academically prestigious masters programs.

The allocation of postgraduate awards presents a further problem. Because of the nature of assessment, the sciences receive a disproportionate allocation of awards. 'For several years now, about 65% of the Commonwealth Postgraduate Research Awards have gone to students in the sciences and technologies, with only about 35% going to the humanities and social sciences. Thus the funded postgraduate places are preferentially allocated to those subject areas in which women are typically under-represented'.²⁰

In both Poiner's and Reilly's surveys of graduands at Sydney and Melbourne Universities, it was found that a higher proportion of women than men actually wished to proceed to postgraduate study. Either their aspirations change or become more difficult to realise, as more women than men anticipated their enrolment in the future, rather than immediately upon graduation.²¹ Apart from financial considerations, if we take a life-span perspec-

tive, it is highly probable that the proximity or actuality of the partnership/family cycle is influential in decisions not to go on. It is also possible that decisions to defer higher degree study may act as a filtering process as they do at the post-secondary to tertiary transition when more girls reverse decisions to proceed after a year off.²² However, Poiner's survey showed that despite a stronger desire to undertake postgraduate study amongst women, larger numbers of women viewed their employment prospects more pessimistically, and more women saw their future career in teaching.²³ As for employment preferences, more women nominated human interest areas such as social work, teaching and paramedical work in which many may also envisage the greater feasibility of combining career (through part-time work) with partnership and raising a family.

Women's dual roles would also be expected to influence the time taken to complete higher degrees. Baldwin found amongst graduates at Monash University that the pressures of coping can seem too much at times and the prospect of 'opting out' presents itself more readily to women than to men who have always assumed that they would have an uninterrupted career.²⁴ Although the participation of women as students, both graduate and undergraduate, has increased rapidly since the mid-1970s, the trend had made little difference so far to the patterns of employment of women in tertiary institutions except in the junior categories. Apart from confronting the barriers discussed above, when highly able women, especially those wishing to pursue careers in research, are faced with this predominantly masculine academic structure they may begin to wonder whether higher degree study is worthwhile. That is what we shall now consider.

Constraints

From a survey of chairmen and other academic staff from various disciplines at La Trobe University, Burns derives an extremely useful triplex framework in which we may consider institutional constraints on women at the postgraduate level, particularly these in pursuit of academic careers.

... there are factors inherent at least in the present dominant epistemologies, and structures of those institutions charged with knowledge generation and dissemination, and the norms both within them and in the society of which they are a part, that maintain and justify the low levels of participation of women in career positions in universities.²⁵

Burns notes that few academics attempt to look at the 'patriarchal' nature of knowledge within the discipline and then

wonder whether that has anything to do with recruitment of female staff in general, or in particular, with cultural elements of the different gender-related patterns of recruitment to different disciplinary areas.²⁶ The structure of knowledge as hitherto defined results in women being 'caught between an unequal struggle to gain legitimacy within the dominant modes and a frustrating set of alternatives at least insofar as alternative and the dominant systems intersect.²⁷

In this context we can extend Jensen's modes of 'acculturation' into academic life into the epistemological sphere: some women make a conscious (or perhaps unconscious) effort to perfect male academic norms; others reaffirm traditional feminine roles, values and ways of thinking while adding the demands of professional careers to their set of responsibilities in compartmentalised, sometimes contradictory ways; still others are intent on synthesising 'women's culture' and 'academic culture' by perceiving gender differences in patterned behaviours but at the same time believing that both cultures might be synthesized during professional interaction into a new reconstituted modus operandi.²⁸

Higher education institutions are built on masculine foundations which restrict the possibilities of altering the structures, at least in the near future. Burns makes several points about this.²⁹ First, predominantly male tenured academic and administrative staff tend to be over fifty. Most were recruited when there was a relatively small pool of similarly qualified women, but they will still be around in positions of power for another 15 or so years. Secondly, level of appointment continues to vary between the sexes. Thirdly, even with the development and implementation of affirmative action programs, Burns asks in the light of the two previous points, 'who puts plans into actions, and what is the nature of the action?'³⁰

'Normative considerations complete Burns' triplex framework of barriers to postgraduate study and academic careers and return us to the social acceptability concept discussed previously. Still prevalent academic opinion that women enter university already conditioned reinforces the vox populi regarding women's lesser ability, lower aspirations and 'appropriate' female domestic roles.³¹ Let us imagine a partial reversal of that common accord along with Taylorson, who, in a survey of doctoral students at Manchester University, asked women to speculate what changes in their experiences could be expected if women constituted half of the PhD candidates, so that a 'social tipping point' had occurred.³² Only one third of Taylorson's respondents considered that they would have a better chance of

establishing supportive relationships, that they would feel less 'freaky' or that the working milieu would change. The remaining two thirds did not expect their experiences to change even if a 'social tipping point' were reached; they pointed out that even in undergraduate courses where women are a majority, they are not taken seriously and that the domestic obligations of women, actual or potential, affect their experiences and opportunities as doctoral candidates aspiring to academic careers.

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